



71. (New) A logistics management tool to facilitate the process of shipping goods by a shipper via a carrier, comprising:

a rate server, connected to a network, having a set of rules by which the carrier transports;

a client application, connected to the network, having the set of rules by which a shipper ships; and

a supervisory server, connected to the network, for communicating the messages between the rate server and the client application; and

an interface associated with at least one of said rate server and said supervisory server, said interface defining a message handling system for communicating with the rate server and thereby isolating a set of rules by which the shipper ships from the rules by which the carrier transports.

72. (New) The tool of Claim 71, wherein:

the client application includes an accessible client interface for communicating with the client application; and

the rate server is configured to communicate with the client application via the client interface.

73. (New) The tool of claim 72, wherein the message handling system comprises:

at least one predefined request message issued by client application to the rate server;

and

at least one predefined response message issued by the rate server to the client application.

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74. (New) The tool of Claim 72, wherein:

the predefined request message includes a weight and delivery date for a package to be shipped; and

the predefined response message includes a cost for shipping the package.

75. (New) The tool of Claim 71, wherein set of rules by which the carrier transports comprises a knowledge base of rate structures and shipping rules and regulations pertaining to the carrier.

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76. (New) The tool of Claim 71, wherein set of rules by which the shipper ships comprises a knowledge base of the shipper's rules, regulations, and practices.

77. (New) The tool of Claim 76, wherein the knowledge base of the shipper's rules, regulations, and practices comprises rules for taking orders for good from customers, packaging the goods, and shipping the goods to customers.

78. (New) The tool of Claim 71, wherein the client application further comprises a user interface for collecting input information from a user about a desired shipping operation and for providing output information.

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79. (New) The tool of Claim 71, wherein the supervisory server comprises an interprocess communication mechanism for passing messages between the rate server and the client application.

80. (New) The tool of Claim 79, wherein the interprocess communication mechanism is selected from the group comprising shared memory, semaphores, named pipes, queues, signals, netbios, sockets, and mail slots.

81. (New) The tool of Claim 79, further comprising an external processing manager for interfacing the logistics management tool with external data bases or other application programs.

82. (New) The tool of Claim 79, further comprising a device manager for interfacing the logistics management tool with external peripheral devices.

83. (New) The tool of Claim 79, wherein the client application further comprises a document server for printing waybills, shipping labels, shipping manifests.

84. (New) The tool of Claim 79, further comprising a document administration object for altering communication standards for the message handling system.

85. (New) The tool of Claim 40, wherein the rate server is installed on a first computer system and wherein the client application is installed on a second computer system, the first and second computer systems communicating over a global-wide area network.

Respectfully submitted,

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